

Preschool and parental influences on physical activity and fundamental movement skills in preschool children from low socio-economic backgrounds: A qualitative study.

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PA levels of children attending different preschools have been reported as varying greatly, with the characteristics of the preschool influencing a child's PA level (Pate, Pfeiffer, Trost, Ziegler and Dowda, [2004], *Pediatrics* 114, 1258-1263). Parents and teachers have been known to overestimate the PA levels that children complete and this may place a decreased importance on encouraging and supporting PA in preschool children (Tucker, [2008], *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23, 547-558). Settings with greater space and opportunities for outdoor play and PA are required, as a lack of space is a major cause of being overweight for 10-40% of children in developed countries (Blair, Wood and Sallis, [1994], *Preventive Medicine*, 23, 558-559). Mastery of Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) is a prerequisite to functioning on a daily basis (Venetsanou and Kambas, [2011], *Physical Education and Sport*, 9, 81-90); they provide the building blocks for future motor skills and PA. Failure to achieve mastery in these skills could prevent preschool children from participating in PA. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate nursery staff and parents' perceptions of preschool children's PA, in relation to the environment, facilities, play and barriers to PA. With institutional ethics approval, focus groups were conducted in 4 preschools, with the inclusion of parents and staff of 3-5 year old children (n = 17, parents = 10, staff = 7) from North Warwickshire, England. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, [2006], *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101) was used to identify key themes and subthemes from the transcripts. Emergent themes included: outside exercise, outdoor equipment, the responsibility of PA, lack of exercise, modern lifestyles, time, cost, health and safety concerns of staff and staff training. Differences were apparent between preschools when discussing measurement of PA and FMS, PA at home, space in the settings and staff training. The findings suggest that preschools provide good opportunities for PA and FMS, especially for pre-schoolers from low socio-economic backgrounds. However, results also highlighted a need for more extensive training of staff in relation to PA and FMS opportunities. To increase PA and FMS in pre-schoolers, interventions are required which continue with the current levels of PA in preschools, combined with parental involvement to deliver PA; through encouraging indoor and outdoor activities and participating in less sedentary activities in the home environment. Interventions also need to provide staff training to support settings to deliver PA and FMS to preschool children.